

VZCZCXYZ0050  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVI #0282/01 0371459  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 061459Z FEB 07  
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6199  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/WHITEHOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS VIENNA 000282

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [KPAO](#) [AU](#) [OPRC](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: February 06, 2007

Looking for Proof

¶1. The Eurofighter investigation committee has concluded that the Austrian government purchased the technically most advanced and, at the same time, most expensive interceptor planes. The version purchased was calculated to be the best deal because only new (not used) planes were considered and maintenance costs were excluded from the cost calculation, although it was clear that these costs would be high. The explanation for this procedure was that no conclusive data was available and could only be elicited through operation of the jets. Centrist daily "Die Presse" reports that military estimates show that the Eurofighter could cost up to four times as much as the original purchase price. An open question is how the decision for the Eurofighter was made in 2002. The FP0e and the Greens suspect that the then-Minister of Finance Karl-Heinz Grassler, as well as Magna played a decisive role. Grassler is said to have pulled strings to bring about the deal and Magna allegedly profits from reciprocal deals and has induced a number of political figures, among them FP0e parliamentary floor leader Peter Westenthaler and the husband of former Vice Chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer, to accept the deal. However, without conclusive proof, it is doubtful the investigative committee's findings will produce a reason to abandon the contract, writes "Die Presse."  
DOMESTIC/INTERNATIONAL

US Wants Austria's Soldiers in Afghanistan

¶2. US Deputy Chief of Mission Scott Kilner gave an interview to provincial daily "Tiroler Tageszeitung" when he paid his first official visit to the province, during which he also met with Provincial Governor Herwig van Staa and Mayor Hilde Zach and visited several companies. In the interview, Kilner stressed the good relations between Austria and the US - once again confirmed during the Austrian EU presidency, which went very well, the DCM said. More cooperation in certain areas would be welcome, though, Kilner stated, specifying Afghanistan as a case in point. At present, Austria has 6 soldiers stationed with ISAF in the country, he said; it would be very helpful if efforts in this direction could be increased. Kilner mentioned the last elections in Afghanistan, when Austria stationed approximately 100 soldiers there. He emphasized that, "the future of Afghanistan is of great importance to all of us. This is not just an American task." In general, he encouraged the Austrians to show "a little more activism in international crises."

We Share Many Values

13. In an interview with provincial daily "Vorarlberger Nachrichten," US Ambassador Susan McCaw stressed the strong bilateral relationship between the US and Austria, which are based on common interests and values. Economic relations are especially good, McCaw pointed out, rating them at "between 8 and 9" on a scale of ten. Political relations, influenced largely by the Iraq war which is unpopular in Austria, are not as good, the US Ambassador admitted, adding there have been "misunderstandings regarding foreign policy." While the Austrian politicians have accepted the facts and are indicating their intention to help, the people are still very critical. "US morality is questioned," said McCaw, and again stating her conviction that "President Bush has a clear vision of matters. He wants to do the right thing, he forcefully addresses the task at hand and he believes in his actions."

Klaus Hdmmmerle from the "Vorarlberger Nachrichten" comments on the interview with the US Ambassador, pointing out that "being a US Ambassador it is no easy job. The USA as the world's only superpower in a present war situation divides people. Against this backdrop, it is not possible to restrict diplomatic work to routine protocol activities. (...) US Ambassador Susan Mc Caw, who has been in office one year, has realized that. (...) Her justification of Bush's Iraq policy does not stem from fervent belief, but from her loyal diplomatic attitude. She appreciates support for the US position - for instance with regard to the Iran issue, where the Americans are by no means the only ones who are afraid of President Ahmadinejad possessing nuclear arms. Susan McCaw, like many of her diplomatic colleagues all over the world, has to defend policies that are unpopular and unappealing. She herself has remained wise and likable."

UN Alarmed: 250,000 Children Used As Soldiers

14. Representatives of 60 governments are in Paris to discuss the issue of child soldiers. In 28 countries, an estimated 250,000 children are sent into combat by ruthless military regimes or

rebels. One third of the children are girls who are also subjected to sexual violence. Experts believe one outcome of the conference will be more money earmarked to reintegrate traumatized children into their respective societies.

Mass circulation daily "Kurier" reports on the UNICEF conference in Paris, where French Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy called the use of child soldiers "more than just a crime - rather it is a time bomb for the stability and the growth in Africa and beyond." He called on Western democracies to set a good example - a clear side-swipe at Britain, which sent some 17-year-old soldiers into Iraq. By Tuesday, the states and assistance organizations will formulate principles aimed at fighting recruitment, freeing the child soldiers and facilitating their reintegration into society. For the latter, financial assistance is necessary to devise effective programs. The task is difficult - it has to be assumed that children that have never known anything else than to secure their survival with weapons will be damaged in one way or another, says Andreas Rister from the organization "terre des homes." Independent daily "Salzburger Nachrichten" singles out Africa, parts of Asia (Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines) and Latin America (Colombia and Haiti) as regions where the recruitment of child soldiers by irregular military forces, rebel groups, or paramilitary units is standard practice.

War Against Iran Would Be Catastrophe

15. British human rights organizations have warned of the possible disastrous effects of a war against Iran. 15 organizations issued a joint report saying such a war could backfire: An attack could strengthen the nuclear ambitions of the country and undermine efforts to bring stability to neighboring Iraq. A confrontation could also push up oil prices and have a negative impact on global economic growth.

Stephen Twigg, head of the "Foreign Policy Center" is quoted by semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung" as referring to the "repugnant" and "unthinkable" consequence of taking military measures against Iran, which he says that, despite its nuclear ambitions, is still years away from achieving the bomb. Meanwhile, Iran remains active on the business sector, reports the daily with reference to Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki's claim that his country had concluded 33 billion dollars worth of business agreements in the oil and gas sector and subway construction. Austria is also among those

countries doing business with Iran - much to the dismay of Washington. Thomas Huemer, spokesman of the Austrian OMV has pointed out to "Wiener Zeitung" that the OMV adhered to European and Austrian laws in its business deals with Iran.

#### GIULIANI ANNOUNCES PRESIDENTIAL BID

¶6. On Monday, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani announced his intention to make a bid for the Republican presidential nomination by submitting the necessary documents for a candidacy at the Federal Election Commission in Washington. Giuliani bases his popularity on his successful fight against crime in New York and his determined actions in the wake of the September 11 attacks. So far, the favorite for the Republican presidential nomination is Arizona Senator John McCain.

#### Last Chance for Baghdad

¶7. On Monday, first preparations were made for an all-out military offensive aimed at stabilizing Baghdad, dividing the city into zones and erecting street barricades. The need to stabilize Baghdad is seen as a precondition for creating stability in the country. There were reportedly differences between the Iraqi government and the Americans whether to focus on the Shiite militia or the Sunni insurgents, though whether and how these differences were resolved is not yet known. The American military campaign will involve 17,500 additional soldiers who will secure the Iraqi capital, plus 4,000 more for the province of Anbar - considered a huge effort for the already overextended US army.

For the Iraqi army, the mission is in a sense a baptism by fire, writes independent daily "Der Standard." For the first time, the Shiite Ministry of the Interior and the Sunni Ministry of Defense are to coordinate their efforts in the planned military offensive. "Der Standard" interviewed Iraq expert Peter Heine, Professor for Islamic Studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin for his assessment of the Baghdad plan. Heine pointed out that, depending on who the security forces will focus on, the Shiites and Sunnis will see themselves as the main target. Not much will change, according to the Iraq expert, who sees the central problem in the fact that the loyalties of the Iraqi security forces do not lie with the state and the government, but rather with their respective clans or religious beliefs.

#### EU/RUSSIA: KOSOVO REMAINS SORE POINT

¶8. The representatives of the EU and Russia are stressing their intention to reinvigorate their relationship. In a meeting in Moscow Monday, however, the Foreign Ministers of the EU troika and Russia were noncommittal about the crucial issue of the independence of Kosovo. The plan put forward by UN chief envoy Martti Ahtisaari for a monitored independence of the province has been rejected by Belgrade, and Moscow has always emphasized that it will only agree to a Kosovo solution that meets with Belgrade's approval.  
McCaw